

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for starting an internal combustion engine installed in an outboard motor mounted on a boat and having a propeller powered by the engine and a mechanism driven by an electric actuator, the engine having other electric loads
5 including at least an electronic control unit to be used for operating the engine, including:

a battery connected to the engine;

a starter motor that starts the engine when voltage is supplied from the battery;

and

10 an ignition switch provided in a voltage supply circuit from the battery to the starter motor, the electric actuator and the electric loads; the ignition switch having positions selected by an ignition key;

wherein the positions of the ignition switch including at least a START position at which the starter motor, the electric actuator and the electric loads are
15 supplied with the voltage from the battery; an ON position at which the voltage supply to the starter motor is discontinued when the key is turned from the START position, a first OFF position at which the voltage supply to the electric actuator and the electric loads is discontinued when the key is turned from the ON position, and a second OFF position at which the current supply to the electric actuator is still continued when the
20 key is turned from the ON position.

2. A system according to claim 1, wherein the ignition key can be pulled out only when the key is at the first OFF position.
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3. A system according to claim 1, wherein manipulation of the key to select the second OFF position is made different from that to select the first OFF position.

4. A system according to claim 1, further including:

a warning unit that discontinues the current supply to the electric loads if the ON position is kept selected for a predetermined period of time when the engine is stopped.

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5. A system according to claim 4, wherein the warning unit warns an operator if the ON position is kept selected when the engine is stopped.

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6. A system according to claim 1, wherein the electric actuator for the mechanism is an electric motor for a steering mechanism of the outboard motor.

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7. A system for starting an internal combustion engine installed in an outboard motor mounted on a boat and having a propeller powered by the engine and a mechanism driven by an electric actuator, the engine having other electric loads including at least an electronic control unit to be used for operating the engine, including:

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a battery connected to the engine;

a starter motor that starts the engine when voltage is supplied from the battery;

and

an ignition switch provided in a voltage supply circuit from the battery to the starter motor, the electric actuator and the electric loads; the ignition switch having

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positions selected by an ignition key;

wherein the positions of the ignition switch including at least a first position at which the starter motor is supplied with the voltage from the battery, a second position at which the electric actuator and the electric loads are supplied with the voltage from

the battery, a third position at which the voltage supply to the electric actuator and the electric loads is discontinued, and a fourth position at which the current supply to the electric actuator is still continued.

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8. A system according to claim 7, wherein the ignition key can be pulled out only when the key is at the third position.

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9. A system according to claim 7, wherein manipulation of the key to select the fourth position is made different from that to select the third position.

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10. A system according to claim 7, further including:
a warning unit that discontinues the current supply to the electric loads if the second position is kept selected for a predetermined period of time when the engine is stopped.

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11. A system according to claim 10, wherein the warning unit warns an operator if the second position is kept selected when the engine is stopped.

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12. A system according to claim 7, wherein the electric actuator for the mechanism is an electric motor for a steering mechanism of the outboard motor.